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BACK TO THE LAND

ALBERTA 1932-48

T. S. RACKHAM



Canada

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Marketing Service

Economics Division

in co-operation with the

Alberta Department of Agriculture

Ottawa, March, 1953

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BACK TO THE LAND

A Study of the Dominion-Provincial Rural
Rehabilitation Plan in Alberta 1932-48

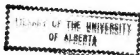
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Assistance in collection and preparation of data was given by A.J. Pyrch and C.M. Kline, of the Economics Division, University of Alberta. The author wishes also to acknowledge the guidance given by officers of the Economics Division and the assistance of Messrs. E.B. Swindlehurst and M.J. Brodie of the Alberta Department of Agriculture. Much appreciation is expressed for the friendly co-operation of the settlers interviewed.

FOREWORD 1/

During the depression years of the 1930's the problem of unemployment and the burden of relief assistance were matters receiving considerable attention. One result was the introduction of a policy whereby the Dominion, Province and Municipalities contributed to assistance for settlement on the land of selected families who would otherwise be in receipt of direct relief. In Alberta, the Relief Settlement Plan was introduced in 1932 and settlement continued until 1941.

Since the experience gained during the operation of the plan may prove of value to administrative officials engaged in similar projects in the future the preparation of this publication was deemed advisable. The survey described herein is the work of Mr. T.S. Backham and his associates of the Dominion Division of Agricultural Economics at the University of Alberta, and was undertaken at the request of the Alberta Department of Agriculture.

On behalf of the Department I wish to express our sincere appreciation for the excellent submission contained herein.

1/ By O.S. Longman, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Province of Alberta.

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INTRODUCTION

Thomas S. Backham 1/

Many people remember that in the early nineteen thirties there were thousands of families stranded in the cities and towns of our country, without either employment or any other means of support. Since charity could not cope with such a situation, it was necessary for these families to seek public aid. More assistance was required than the municipalities could provide. Hence, it became necessary for the Provincial and Federal Governments to search for means of alleviating these conditions.

Many of the unemployed had been brought up in farming areas. It was thought that those with sufficient farming experience could be employed on farms, and made at least partially self-sustaining. For many, rural life would be preferable to the kind of life experienced under relief conditions in urban centres.

Here, then was a situation in which Federal and Provincial aid, in financing the settlement of suitable applicants, would not only obviate the necessity of direct local relief, but would also present an opportunity for the individual recipients to rehabilitate themselves. Such aid was made possible by an agreement between the Federal and Provincial Governments under the Relief Act of 1932. This agreement was revised and extended originally for two years under the Relief Act of 1934, later for four years under the Unemployment Relief and Assistance Act of 1936, and finally under the Unemployment and Agricultural Assistance Act of 1940.

As a result of similar agreements, several provinces introduced "back-to-the-land" schemes for their urban unemployed. The relief settlement scheme in Alberta assisted hundreds of families to move from towns and cities to farms. To appraise the efficiency of this form of aid it was deemed advisable to make a study of the operation of the plan in Alberta.

METHOD OF STUDY

Source of Data.— Detailed information, covering 1,081 2/ of the 1,092 placements, was transcribed from the original 'settlers' records previously filed by the Alberta Government. In addition, 70 records of established settlers were obtained by personal interview. Other related information was secured from officials of the government agencies connected with the scheme, and from reports of the advisory committee responsible for the administration of the plan.

1/ Formerly Assistant Economist, Economics Division, Canada Department of Agriculture, University of Alberta.

2/ Eleven individual files were not available at the time of survey.

Limitations of the Data.- Part I of this study deals mainly with historical data taken from provincial records concerning the settlers. Details were lacking only in a few individual cases. Part II deals with the progress of the settlers established under the scheme. On the basis of the provincial records, it was estimated that 300 families remained on or near the farms on which they first settled. The scattered nature of the settlement precluded visits to all settlers so interviews were limited to 70 operators still present in areas considered to be reasonably representative of conditions obtaining elsewhere. Since the provincial records did not reveal the subsequent movements of settlers who closed their accounts by full payment, or by abandoning the scheme, it was not possible to obtain information from anyone who had left his farm.

PART I

THE RELIEF SETTLEMENT SCHEME

DETAILS OF THE SCHEME

At first the Dominion Government contributed one-third of an amount not exceeding \$600 per family. This amount (\$600) was to be a non-recoverable expenditure, as were additional amounts later contributed for third year sustenance and for dependents' allowances. This agreement, which started in 1932, was periodically renewed until it was finally terminated in 1942.

The Provincial Government also contributed one-third of the amount required, as above, but it could recover the amount expended. In addition, the province set up the scheme and accepted the entire responsibility for its administration, without charge to the settlers for any expenses incurred.

Each of the municipal authorities, likewise, made a recoverable contribution of one-third of the amount expended on every settler whom it recommended. The municipalities agreed to accept the responsibility for settlers who failed, should they return and again require direct relief.

Disposition of the Loan.- When the scheme was initiated, a maximum loan of \$600 was to be made available to each family returning to the land, if that family would otherwise have to be given direct relief. Of this, a minimum of \$100 was withheld to provide subsistence in the second year. From the balance of \$500, \$180 was set aside for first year subsistence, which was paid at \$10 per month. The remainder of \$320 was to be used for establishment purposes. This amount, first of all, had to cover the cost of necessary stock and equipment, usually a team and a cow, a wagon and harness. In addition, such necessities as building supplies, feed, and transportation expenses from city to farm had to be met from this fund. If possible, a portion was carried over to take care of needs arising in the second year of settlement. No part of the loan was to be used for

the acquisition of a farm, but in a very few cases the establishment fund was drawn upon to pay for breaking a few acres of land.

When, in 1934, it was found necessary to grant third year subsistence to some of the settlers, \$100 was provided at the rate of \$8.33 per month, which meant that some settlers then received a maximum loan of \$700. In 1936 this amount became the basic loan when revision of the agreement made it possible to provide both third year sustenance and additional allowances for families with children. For these, subsistence payments were increased by \$1 per child per month, so long as the maximum loan would not thereby exceed \$1,000 in the three years.

In the case of transient settlers, who were not sponsored by a municipality, a smaller loan $\frac{1}{2}$, at first not exceeding \$400, was provided by equal contributions from the Dominion and Provincial Governments. Subsistence was provided at the same rates as for the larger loan so that only \$180 was left available for the purchase of stock and equipment. The additional allowances for third year subsistence and for dependents were also made applicable to these settlers. At all times, regardless of the size of his initial loan, any settler who was able to get along without these subsistence payments was permitted to use an equivalent amount for further purchases of stock or equipment.

Obligations of the Settler.- Applicants desiring to receive assistance towards settlement had to apply to the Advisory Board set up by the Provincial Government. In order to satisfy the authorities that they had some chance of succeeding, both husband and wife had to be either experienced in farming or sufficiently well acquainted with rural conditions to show their willingness to pioneer. If acceptable to the committee the settler then had to prove his acquisition of a suitable piece of land, with a guaranteed tenure of at least three years. When the land had been inspected by a representative of the board and then approved, the loan was made available to the settler and he could proceed to his homestead. At this time each settler was required to sign a lien with which the Provincial Government secured its interest in the chattels bought for him, this usually being for an amount equal to the recoverable portion of the loan.

At no time was there any specified date for repayment of the recoverable part of the loan, nor did the loan bear interest. At first, those settlers who became successfully established were encouraged to make repayment by crediting their account with bonuses, amounting in the fourth year of settlement to 20 per cent of any repayment made. The rate of this bonus was, however, progressively reduced for each year succeeding the fourth year of settlement, so as to make early repayment more attractive. More recently, repayment was accepted on a different basis whereby payment of the actual amount expended on stock and equipment was all that was required, and on this amount no bonus or discount was allowed.

Y Called a two-way loan, since it lacked the third municipal grant.

AVAILABILITY OF LAND

Since no financial assistance was given to prospective settlers in securing land, it was necessary for them to seek farms that could be acquired 1/ without cash payments. There was no shortage of such land, although it varied both in quality and usefulness. The land was situated for the most part either in remote areas fringing older settlements or in less desirable locations within them.

Homesteads.- Undeveloped crown lands were available in Alberta for homesteading. These lands were usually in unreserved forest areas and thus often required great effort in clearing for cultivation. Settlers were limited to filing on one quarter section for which the registration fee was \$10. By "proving up" the homestead through the completion of improvement and residence conditions required over a period of years, the settler obtained clear title to the land. This homestead policy was discontinued in 1939.

Cultivation Leases.- In addition to homesteading, long term leases could be secured on school lands and other provincial lands designated as Cultivation and Grazing Leases. In 1939 Agricultural Leases were offered to replace the homestead policy. Regulations governing these Agricultural Leases first stipulated a 20-year renewable term, but in 1947 they were amended to grant the settler clear title. These regulations called for minimum accomplishments of building and land improvement over the first 10-year period of settlement. From the time of settlement until purchase was completed the rent amounted to a one-eighth share of the crop on the minimum acreage specified for each year. However, if the farm was partly improved before the settler took out the lease, the rent could be set at a higher rate.

C.P.R. "Brush Contract" Lands.- In addition to conventional purchase agreements, the Canadian Pacific Railway offered a special "Brush Contract" arrangement to colonists to enable them to become established more easily. As a concession to Relief Settlers, the cash deposit of \$25, which would normally be required for registration, was usually waived. The terms of the contract required the settler to erect a habitable house and an adequate barn, to sink a well and to fence the land. Besides this he and his family had to occupy the land within six months of making the contract. Payment of neither principal nor interest was required in the first four years, but the taxes had to be paid by the settler each year. The settler contracted to clear, pile, and burn the brush from five acres which was to be broken and cropped in the second year. He had to clear, break, and crop a further five acres in each succeeding year, as a continuous process of land improvement. After four years, the settler was to make his first land payment, and to continue thereafter with annual payments, according to a scale governed by the value of the land, as set down in the original contract.

1/ Table 1 on page 8 shows land acquisition.

Private Leasing Arrangements.- Settlers were able to enter into private rental agreements with land owners, provided that they could secure a three-year contract, and that the owner did not impose unreasonable conditions on them. These contracts were often of the crop-share type and the farms were usually poorly developed but had some advantage in that they possessed some buildings and had some land broken.

Owned Land.- A few fortunate settlers either owned land or had some equity in a parcel of land, and took advantage of the scheme to leave the city and re-establish themselves on these farms. Others were able either to trade city property for an equity in a farm, or to enter into a purchase agreement on a cash or a crop-share basis. Some were aided by relatives already farming who were able to provide them with land on satisfactory terms. Still others were able to secure land from municipalities under the Tax Recovery Act.

COST OF THE SCHEME

Amount Expended for Settlers' Establishment.- In Alberta the relief settlement scheme was operative for ten years, during which time 1,092 farm placements were made. For this a total cash amount of \$671,820 was expended on the settlers, at an average of \$615 per family.

In round figures contributions were as follows:

Dominion	\$228,000
Provincial	\$248,000
Municipal	\$195,000
<hr/>	
Total	\$671,000

These figures do not represent the total cash cost to the governments involved, since administrative expenses were not included. Moreover, reductions due to repayment and salvage recovery have to be considered.

Amount Recovered.- At March 31, 1948, recoveries were:

From 672 salvage proceeds	\$ 86,827
From 264 full and 57 partial payments	\$ 83,233
<hr/>	
Total	\$170,060

Although an estimated amount of \$37,273 still remains recoverable it is likely that only small further recoveries will be made.

Net Cost of Settlers' Establishment.- Dominion Government contributions were non-recoverable provided that the settlers fulfilled their obligations. When there was abandonment the Dominion shared in the amounts recovered. The Provincial Government made recoveries both from salvage proceeds and

repayments by successful settlers. The municipal authorities involved also realized recoveries from salvage and repayments, but only on behalf of those settlers for whom they had made contributions.

At March 31, 1948, excluding administrative expenses, the net costs to the different agencies involved were:

Dominion Government	\$ 212,728	42%
Provincial Government	160,828	32%
Municipal Government	127,604	26%
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Total	\$ 501,160	100%

From this statement it will be observed that the net cost of establishment was about \$459 per family placed on farms, or slightly over \$97 per individual removed from the relief rolls.

Cost of administration.- Due to the fact that municipal and provincial public service departments already existing were able to take over a large part of the administration required by the introduction of the scheme, it is not possible to get accurate figures giving the costs involved.

There is no doubt, however, that, since 1932, administrative expenses had constituted a considerable additional cost, particularly to the Provincial Government. Even in the absence of the scheme, some costs would have arisen in administering relief to these families.

The Provincial Government and various municipalities contributed additional relief in the form of clothing when R.C.M.P. reports requested such aid for needy families. Also, medical aid was contributed by municipalities originally responsible for the settlers. However, it is most likely that these costs would have been the same had settlement not taken place.

SETTLEMENT UNDER THE SCHEME

Placement of the Settlers.- Settlement was predominantly in the western and northern agricultural areas of the province. Consequently most of the settlers were located in comparatively undeveloped, or completely virgin, gray wooded and transition soil type areas (Figure 1). Since each settler had to acquire his own land, there was little tendency to settle in groups, as such, although settlement did seem to concentrate in some areas where there was more land, either suitable, or available, for settlement. In general, settlement was scattered in remote bush districts, with very little in prairie regions.

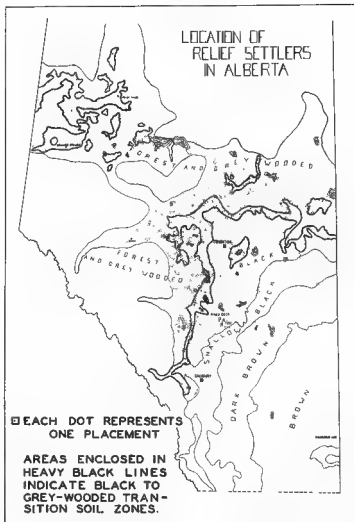


Figure 1

Acquisition of Land by the Settlers.— The applicant for settlement was responsible for locating a suitable piece of land and was required to submit to the Advisory Board a satisfactory agreement providing security of land tenure (Table 1) for a period of at least three years. But the land selected by the settler had to pass the inspection of a land inspector responsible to the Advisory Board before their approval was given to grant the settlement loan. However, many settlers changed their land locations by making new contracts to acquire more suitable or desirable farms before completing the three-year tenure first secured. Some of them broke their contracts and subsequently were unable to re-establish themselves in a suitable location.

Table 1.— Land Tenure of 1,081 Settlers at Their First Location

Form of contract	Number	Per cent
Owned land	47	4.3
Filed on homesteads	431	39.9
Rented land	292	27.0
Registered on C.P.R. Branch contracts	144	13.3
Settled Crown Land by Cultivation Lease	45	4.2
Contracted purchase agreements	122	11.3
Total	1,081	100.0

Rate of Settlement.— Although the scheme was initiated early in 1932 it was some time before the administration could be fully organized. It was late in the summer before any placements were made. Consequently a large number of applications were carried over for settlement in 1933 which was the peak year of settlement. The low settlement rate from 1935 to 1937 was partly due to hesitation concerning the success of the scheme, and partly to indecision among prospective settlers arising from the fact that the Federal Government had given no assurance of continuing aid in relief settlement after 1934. However, a temporary extension of two years was agreed upon in 1934, and the scheme was again extended late in 1936 for a period of four years. These extensions, together with an increase in the amount of assistance given, created new interest throughout 1938 and 1939. Settlement declined markedly under war conditions in 1940 and 1941.

CLASSIFICATION OF THE SETTLERS

For the purpose of this study settlers were classified as established settlers or as abandonments, according to the status of their accounts (Table 2) as found in the files of the Alberta Government.

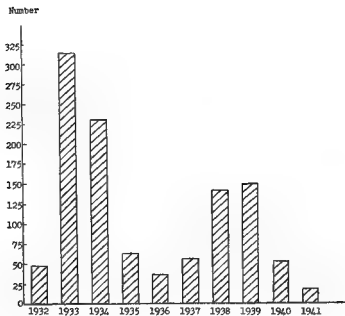


Fig. 2.-Number of Placements Made Annually - 1932-41

Table 2.- Settlers Grouped According to Kind of Repayment
Made on Their Account

Grouping	:	Number	:
Accounts:	:		:
Closed - Fully repaid		264	
Open - Partially repaid		57	
unpaid		<u>99</u>	420
Abandoned - Salvage completed			<u>672</u>
Total			1,092

Established Settlers.- As at March 31, 1948, 420 settlers were deemed to be successful since the 264 settlers who had closed their accounts were, at the time of completing repayment, either successfully established on their own land or able to make repayment from earnings elsewhere. The remaining 156 settlers, whose accounts were still open, were self-supporting and had become established on their farms with varying degrees of success. Many of them have been capable of making some repayment on their original loan.

Abandonments.- Where the settlers were unsuccessful in becoming established on their farms, the Provincial Government repossessed the chattels still subject to the'r lien. There were 672 1/ cases of this sort in which the farms were usually abandoned on short notice. However, before final abandonment a few farms were retained as homes by the families of men enlisted or employed elsewhere. The repossessed livestock and machinery were salvaged, either by private sale to new settlers, or by local farm auction sales; the proceeds, less expenses, were turned back to the Provincial Government for distribution among the participating governments.

Table 3.- Reasons for Abandonment

Reason	:	Number	:	Per Cent
	:		:	
Enlistment		83		12
Death		27		4
Poor Health, domestic trouble, etc.		83		12
Other employment		227		34
Failures a/		226		34
Retirement		20		3
Total		666		100

a/ The group classified as "failures" includes those settlers who did not become self-supporting on the farm, and who, after abandoning their farms, returned to the city of origin without assuring themselves of employment there.

1/ Details concerning 2bx of these abandonments were not obtained (See footnote page 1).

Returns to City Relief.- Little data could be secured regarding settlers whose accounts had been closed by salvage proceedings. Including enlistments, there were 310 who were listed as having employment when they left their farms. Of the rest, 187 or 17 per cent of the 1,092 1/ families settled, had returned directly to the relief rolls. Excluding deaths there were 148 settlers for whom no further record of relief or employment was found.

FACTORS INFLUENCING DEGREE OF SUCCESS

Settlement started in 1932 and continued until 1941 with two periods accounting for four-fifths of the placements (1933-34 had 50 per cent, and 1938-39 had 31 per cent). Abandonments commenced within a short time of first settlement (Figure 5) and continued to 1947. As may be seen from the figure, there were two peak periods of abandonment directly following the peak periods of settlement.

It is logical that the number of abandonments would be greater following periods of heavy settlement since larger groups would probably include larger numbers of unsuitable settlers. In 1935 and 1936 discouraging drought and frost conditions may have caused more abandonments. In 1940-41 many settlers enlisted and others went to remunerative wartime employment. These circumstances no doubt hastened abandonments. However, the rate of abandonment expressed as a percentage of number of farms settled actually decreased throughout the period.

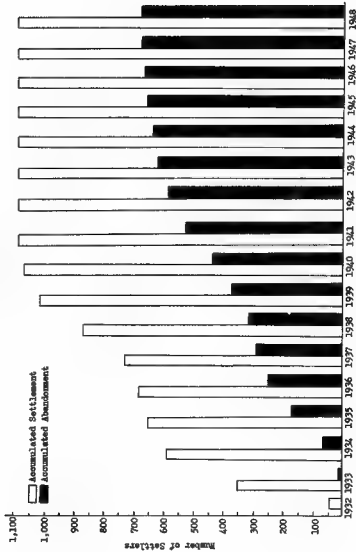
Table 4.- Rate of Abandonment according to the Year
in Which Settler was Placed

Year	Number settled	Number later abandoned	Per cent
1932	48	36	75
1933	311	217	70
1934	227	158	70
1935	61	32	52
1936	33	20	61
1937	52	28	54
1938	189	80	58
1939	146	70	48
1940	50	21	42
1941	14	4	29
Total	1,081	666	(Average) 62

This reflects the slowly-improving position of agriculture generally compared to the conditions existing at the start of settlement, as well as the greater assistance offered for the establishment of the settlers. Also, more care may have been exercised in selecting applicants for settlement.

1/ Further details concerning 11 of these families were not obtained.

Figure 3.- Comparative Yearly Cumulative Settlement and Cumulative Abandonment
1932-1948



Farm Experience.- Farm-born settlers had a greater degree of success (Table 5) than city-born settlers who had worked part-time in the harvest fields and at other casual agricultural occupations for various periods of time. Those who had been raised on a farm and then learned some other trade were more successful than all others, probably because of greater adaptability and initiative.

Table 5.- Degree of Success as affected by Farm Experience

Kind of farm experience	: Number	Settlers established	
	: settled	: Number	: Per cent
Raised on farm, no other experience	251	107	43
Raised on farm, but had subsequent full-time experience in another occupation	362	166	46
Part-time farming experience only	463	142	31
No farm experience	5	0	0
Total	1,081	415 (average)	38

Other Experience. Settlers who had recent experience with growing crops and handling livestock in modified agricultural occupations showed the greatest degree of success (Table 6). The next most successful classification was the group familiar with building trades, who probably were able more rapidly to make their homes comfortable and to provide shelter for their livestock. The least successful group was the one comprised of those who had been employed in merchandising and other small business occupations.

Table 6.- Degree of Success as affected by kind of Other Experience

Kind of other experience	: Number	Settlers established	
	: settled	: Number	: Per cent
Modified agriculture - gardeners, draymen, etc.	54	27	50
Construction trades - carpenters, etc.	204	98	48
No experience	234	90	38
Mechanical trades	409	146	36
Labourers, handyman, oil field workers, etc.	106	35	33
Small business trades - butchers, grocers, etc.	74	19	26
Total	1,081	415 (average)	38

National Origin.- Scandinavians, (Table 7) probably benefiting by their familiarity with forest conditions and the related type of agriculture, indicated the greatest ability to succeed. Continental European settlers, displaying tenacity and self-reliance, were highly successful. The above-average success of the American group was, no doubt, largely attributable to the aggressive character of their pioneering efforts.

Table 7.- Degree of Success as Affected by National Origin

National Origin	Number	Settlers Established	
	settled	Number	Per cent
Scandinavian	38	22	58
Continental European	111	55	50
American	200	86	43
Canadian	506	177	35
British	226	75	33
Total	1,081	415 (Average)	38

Age of Settler at Time of Placement.- As settlers, the older men were more successful than the younger group, probably because, as age advanced, fewer opportunities were presented for employment elsewhere. Moreover, the older settlers' families were usually able to contribute materially to the work done on the farm.

Table 8.- Degree of Success as Affected by Age When Settled

Age group	Number	Settlers established	
	settled	Number	Per cent
Up to 35 years	478	139	29
35 - 50 years inclusive	463	209	45
Over 50 years	155	67	33
Total	1,081	415 (Average)	38

Size of Family.- Tables 9, 10 and 11 show that settlers with families had an advantage since the children, by contributing to the work of the farm, released the settler for more productive farm tasks and outside employment. By their work both on and off the farm older sons played a large part in developing the holdings of many of the relief settlers.

Table 9.- Establishment of Settlers as Affected by Children in the Family

Number in family	:	Number settled	:	Settlers established	
				Number	Per cent
0		107		39	36
1 or more		974		376	39
Total		1,081		415 (Average)	38

Table 10.- Establishment of Settlers as Affected by
Number of Sons in the Family

Number of sons in family	:	Number settled	:	Settlers established	
				Number	Per cent
0		274		98	32
1 - 2		600		222	37
3 or more		207		105	51
Total		1,081		415 (Average)	38

Table 11.- Establishment of Settlers as Affected by
Number of Daughters in the Family

Number of daughters in family	:	Number settled	:	Settlers established	
				Number	Per cent
0		351		126	36
1 - 2		575		219	38
3 or more		155		70	45
Total		1,081		415 (Average)	38

Acresage Improved at outset on Settler's Farm.- Degree of success in final establishment was shown to vary in accordance with the number of improved acres on the farm at the time of settlement. Successful settlers started with an average of 22 cultivated acres per farm while those who ended as unsuccessful placements had only an average of ten cultivated acres per farm at the start. Of those who succeeded 46 per cent had some broken land at the time of settlement, but of those who failed to become established only 37 per cent had any broken land.

Table 12.- Degree of Success as Affected by Acreage Improved at Outset

Improved acreage	: Number	Settlers established	
	: settled	Number	Per cent
	:	:	
0	648	225	35
1 - 10	102	27	26
11 - 40	179	76	42
41 - 100	110	47	43
Over 100	42	29	69
Total	1,081	415 (Average)	38

Buildings.- A slight advantage was held by settlers who secured farms possessing buildings at the time of settlement. (Table 13).

Table 13.- Effect of Buildings on Success of Settlement

	: Number	Settlers established	
	: settled	Number	Per cent
	:	:	
At time of settlement:			
Buildings absent	564	198	35
Buildings present	517	217	42
Total	1,081	415	38

Other Factors.- For the few settlers who started with four or more horses or two or more cattle, there was a better chance of success, but it was likely that the same settlers also had the advantage of having more land under cultivation.

Of the 173 settlers who started with the two-way loan $\frac{1}{47}$ per cent were successful establishments. This greater than average rate of establishment may be explained by the fact that these settlers had come from unorganized municipal districts where recent farm experience could have been more readily acquired. Thirty per cent of this group, as compared to 23 per cent for all settlers, had been raised on farms but had gained no other experience.

1/ The two-way loan was, on the average, \$200 smaller than the three-way loan.

PART II

ANALYSIS OF THE PROGRESS AND STATUS
OF SEVENTY SETTLERS ESTABLISHED ON FARMS

PROGRESS OF THE SETTLERS

At August 1948 the 70 settlers ^{1/}interviewed in this study had spent an average of 12 years on their farms. Fifteen of them had, however, left their first locations and acquired new farms which they had operated for varying periods averaging five years. Of the 55 families still occupying the farms on which they had first settled, 18 had enlarged their original holdings by the purchase or rental of additional land; the remaining 37 settlers had made no change.

Land Improvement.- A major obstacle to the early progress of most of these settlers was the very limited amount of cropland available for their use (Table 14). Although the average was ten acres of cultivated land per settler at time of placement, 57 per cent of these settlers had no cultivated land.

Table 14.- Distribution of Farms According to Cultivated
Acres at Time of Placement and at Time of Survey

Size in acres	At the start	At August 30, 1948
cultivated	No. of farms	No. of farms
0	47	1
1 - 10	9	0
11 - 40	7	24
41 -100	7	31
Over 100	0	14
Total	70	70

However, the situation at time of survey showed that nearly all of these farms had sufficient improved land to provide for the sustenance of the settler and his family. At August 30, 1948, probably 20 per cent of the farms had enough crop land to maintain a self-sufficing and stable type of farm business under normal agricultural conditions.

Although they made substantial gains in acquiring cultivated land (Table 15), the settlers generally were not able to increase their cultivated acreage very rapidly by land improvement. To advance their position nearly half of the settlers either moved to improved farms or secured additional land which had already been improved.

^{1/} Source and Limitations of Data - Pages 1 and 2.

Table 15.- Method and Average Amount of Increase in Cultivated Acreage Achieved by 1948

	:	:	:	Settlers still occupying
	:	For 15 settlers :	:	original holdings
	:	all 70 : occupying new:	18 with en-	37 with un-
	:	forms :	farms :	larged holdings.changed holdings
	:	:	:	- acres -

Average per farm:

Broken at start	10	-	9	10
Acquired by purchase	19	75	19	0
Acquired by rental	8	17	15	0
Cleared and broken	38	25	45	40
Total presently cultivated	75	117	88	50

Table 16 shows the average amount of clearing done. The settlers clearing land by hand completed an average of four acres per year. For power clearing the rate was governed by the ability of the settler to pay the high cash cost involved. This rate ranged from five acres to 90 acres per season. Thirty-six per cent of the settlers had some custom clearing done on their farms.

Table 16.- Method and Amount of Clearing

	:	:	:	For settlers on
	:	411 : 15 farms of :	:	first locations
	:	70 : relocated :	:	
	:	farms : settlers :	18 enlarged :	32 unchanged
	:	:	:	- acres -

Average cleared:

By hand	31	17	41	31
By power machinery	18	9	5	17
Average total cleared	43	26	46	48

Most of the breaking was done with power machinery since work in the bush areas was too difficult for horses. Many of the settlers

acquired old steel-wheeled tractors for the purpose of doing their own breaking. As with clearing, the rate of breaking averaged about four acres per year for those doing the job for themselves. An average of 14 acres was broken in each custom contract but two or three years usually elapsed between breakings by this method. Land improvement occurred quickly on these farms if the operator could secure the cash required to hire the work done.

Table 17.- Method and Amount of Breaking

	11	15 farms of:	For settlers on
	70	relocated :	first locations
	farms:	settlers	18 enlarged 39 unchanged
	:	:	:
		- acres -	
Average broken:			
By the operator	24	31	27
By custom contract	15	4	18
Total	39	25	45

Building Improvement.- In the first years of settlement, the 50 settlers who had no buildings on their farms at the start erected comparatively temporary pioneer buildings. However, most of these buildings, constructed usually of logs or locally-produced lumber were still in use at time of survey. Improvement of buildings was modest by comparison

Table 18.- Buildings on the 70 Farms at Time of Settlement and at Time of Survey

Kind of building	at time of settlement:	At August 30, 1948
	:	:
	- total number	
Houses	20	74
Barns	15	88
Chicken houses and piggeries	11	90
Garages and machine sheds	5	40
Granaries	9	112
Total buildings	60	424

with the concurrent land improvement and, in the early years, consisted mainly in the construction of make-shift buildings for the accommodation of increasing numbers of livestock. Most of these buildings were left unpainted and, on the whole, the farmsteads still had a drab and disorderly appearance. In recent years, however, a few settlers had built new houses and other well-planned farm buildings of permanent construction. New

structures were being painted. In addition, many of these settlers had planned and were embarking on replacement or reconstruction programs for their buildings.

Land Ownership.- Farm ownership (Table 19) advanced from 13 per cent to 53 per cent. Of the remaining 47 per cent 21 per cent had made good progress towards ownership while 26 per cent had acquired little or no equity in their farms. It also appeared that those having purchase agreements requiring cash payments acquired ownership more slowly than those with other kinds of contract.

Table 19.- Kinds of Land Contract Held by 70 Settlers at Time of Placement and at Time of Survey

Kind of contract	At time of placement		At August 30, 1948	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Owned title	9	13	37	53
Homestead	9	13	-	-
C.F.R. Brush Contract	26	37	16	23
Rental contract	5	7	2	3
Cultivation lease	7	10	6	8
Purchase agreement	14	20	9	13
Total	70	100	70	100

Increase in Size of Farm.- The overall acreage occupied by these 70 farmers had increased 45 per cent from a total of 77 quarter sections at time of placement to 112 quarter sections at time of survey.

Table 20.- Increase in Size of Farms Occupied by 70 Settlers

Size of farm	At time of placement	At August 30, 1948
	-number-	
One quarter section	63	37
One half section	7	25
Three quarter section	-	7
One section	-	1
Total	70	70

Acquisition of Livestock.- At time of placement these settlers had not acquired sufficient livestock (Table 21) to provide all their needs in milk, beef, pork, eggs and poultry. However, most of them quickly in-

creased livestock numbers up to the point where they supplied their families

Table 21.- Total Livestock on 70 Farms

Kind	At time of placement	At August 30, 1948	Increase
	- total number -		- per cent -
Horses	152	303	100
Cattle	116	985	550
Hogs, sheep and goats	15	710	4,600
Poultry	427	4,168	875

with most of the products they required. Beyond this point, increases were governed largely by the settler's ability to feed additional stock. Horse numbers increased because of a need for more power, Table 22 presents

Table 22.- Distribution of Livestock on 70 Farms

Kind	At time of placement		At August 30, 1948	
	Farms	Average	Farms	Average
	possessing	item	possessing	item
	item	number	item	number
Horses	69	2.0	69	4
Milk cows	66	1.5	65	5.5
Other cattle	13	1.5	65	8
Hogs	6	2.5	47	9
Sheep and goats	0	0	8	25
Poultry	22	19	59	70

a distribution of livestock and indicates the importance of livestock in the farm business of these settlers.

Acquisition of Machinery.- Most of the machinery found on these farms was obsolete. Farm tractors were steel-wheeled and unwieldy for small farm cultivation. Among these tractors were five heavy crawler types used mainly for custom work; there were only four up-to-date small rubber-tired tractors.

The balance of equipment was in most cases a minimum assortment of old machines designed for horse power, often the same machinery with which the settler had been equipped at the start. Less than 30 per cent of the settlers had acquired tractor-drawn machinery of any sort at the time of the survey, since small acreages under cultivation (Table 14) had limited the economic justification for such purchases. Moreover, the type of work to be done on the newly-cleared land was not generally suited to the small rubber-tired tractors best adapted to small farms.

Table 23.- Power Machinery on 70 Farms

Kind	At time of placement	At August 30, 1948
	No. settlers with item	No. settlers with item
Cars and trucks	1	51
Tractors	0	38
Threshers	0	3
Hydraulic stackers	0	2

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF SETTLERS

Assets and Liabilities.- In the beginning there was relatively little variation between the value and amount of one settler's assets as compared to those of others in the group. At the time of survey the average value of their assets had increased five-fold (Table 24). Material additions (Tables 20, 21, 22 and 23) although often valued at high levels in line with current conditions, were responsible for the greatest part of this increase. Real estate had advanced in value because of land improvement and the construction of buildings.

Table 24.- Average Assets of 70 Settlers at Time of Placement and at Time of Survey

Kind of asset	At time of placement	At August 30, 1948
- dollars -		
Real estate	929	3,432
Livestock	176	1,536
Machinery	124	1,506
Other assets	234	834
Total	1,463	7,308

Some of the settlers had added little to their possessions and profited only by the appreciation in value of what they already owned. Other settlers had made extensive additions to their land, equipment, and livestock, and were in a better position to profit through value appreciation. Thus, at the time of survey the assets of settlers, especially in machinery, varied between wide limits.

Concurrent with the rising values of their assets, these settlers were able to reduce their liabilities. At time of placement their debt positions were similar, all of them being indebted to the government for two-thirds of their establishment loan and most of them having additional personal or land indebtedness. At time of survey, however, 21 per cent

of the settlers had no liabilities while 13 per cent substantially increased their debts. The rest had debts either equal to or less than the liabilities they had at the beginning. At the time of survey 60 per cent of these settlers had made full repayment of the establishment loan which had been cut down considerably to facilitate repayment, but several of the remaining 40 per cent still owed the full amount of their liability. Store bills, doctor bills, and other personal debts were at a low figure. Also the gross original land debt had been materially reduced while new land had been secured without involving serious additional indebtedness.

Change in Net Worth.- At time of placement, the net worth of nearly half of the settlers was a negative value since many of them had incurred doctors' bills or other personal liabilities. Moreover, the subsistence portion of their loans had not been received.

Table 25.- Net Worth Statement of 70 Settlers

	Total	Total		Increase
	assets	liabilities	net worth	in net worth
	:	:	:	:
	-	-	-	-
Average amount:				
At time of placement	1,468	1,829	233	-
At August 30, 1948	7,307	770	6,537	6,304

Gains in net worth for the period of settlement varied upwards from a low of \$1,200. Twelve per cent of the settlers realized gains of less than \$2,000 and 17 per cent more than \$10,000; gains of the remaining 71 per cent fell between these limits. The 11 settlers showing the highest gains in net worth had been engaged in some other business as well as farming.

Settlers' Income.- At the beginning most of these 70 settlers had difficulty in securing sufficient income to provide themselves and their families with bare necessities. Their farms, under favourable conditions, could be made to yield perquisites such as animal products, garden produce, wild fruit, and fuel, but few of the farms were able to provide any income in the way of cash crops, except when a market for firewood or logs could be found. This small support from the farm was augmented by the monthly subsistence allowance and any income the settlers could secure from available outside work.

Although records of farm receipts were not obtained, a comparison of the sources of farm revenue (Table 26) at time of placement and at time of survey indicates an increase in the settlers' ability to derive satisfactory incomes from their farms.

Table 26.- Sources of Farm Revenue of 70 Settlers

		: At time of placement :		: At August 30, 1948 :	
		: Number :	: Ave. unit of :	: Number :	: Ave. unit of :
		: with item :	: production :	: with item :	: production :
		:	:	:	:
Cropland acres	24	29		69	75
Milk cows	66	1.5		65	5.5
Other cattle	13	1.4		65	7.8
Hogs, sheep and goats	6	2.5		50	12
Poultry	28	19		59	70

As more land was brought into cultivation farm returns increased, both from the sale of crops and from the sale of livestock and livestock products. Crop production was in most cases channelled into livestock enterprises which in turn provided increased income from the fuller use of labour. Most of the settlers quite early developed milking herds of from four to eight cows which provided small but reasonably stable incomes. In conjunction with the dairy cows wartime hog production became important but this enterprise had dwindled in the immediate post-war years. At time of survey, beef cattle production appeared to be displacing the dairy enterprise to some extent.

Table 27 indicates the kinds of non-farm income received by the settlers. The sources of income other than subsistence payments, pensions, and family allowances provided unpredictable amounts varying from year to year and from settler to settler. Only about half the settlers indicated having earned outside income at any time. At the time of survey,

Table 27.- Derivation of Non-Farm Income

		: For the first :	: For the year :
		: year of :	: preceding :
		: settlement :	: August 30, 1948 :
		:	:
		- number with receipts-	
Subsistence Pmts.	70	70	0
Pensions	70	1	4
Family allowances	70	0	56
Legacies and sale of property	70	3	7
Sales of wood, etc.	70	8	8
Outside farm labour	70	16	11
Non-farm labour	70	10	11
Custom work	70	1	5

15 per cent of the settlers were making a business of non-farm labour or

custom work, while a number of settlers had been engaged occasionally in various part-time occupations. However, regardless of the spotty nature of these outside sources of revenue, they appeared to have been very important to the settlers concerned. Even small amounts thus received had materially aided them either in providing for their families or in financing some farm improvement.

OPERATOR'S HISTORY

Nationality.- Canadians of British origin constituted the predominating group among these settlers. Regardless of origin, nearly all of the settlers had spent their mature life largely in Alberta and could be considered well-seasoned in western living conditions. Average length of domicile in Canada was 42 years and in Alberta 34 years.

Age of Settlers.- At the time of survey the average age of these settlers was 53 years. Most of them were over 30 years of age when they settled. It would seem natural that there would be more stability in such a group than in one in which the average age was lower.

Education.- Moderate educational levels, (Table 28) had been reached by the settlers and their families. Isolation had not seriously interfered with educational opportunity. It may be that the settlers' unfortunate urban experiences had prompted them to have their children take maximum advantage of available education or that family allowance regulations

Table 28.- Educational Levels Reached by the Operator and Family Members Residing on the Farm

	: Number involved	: Average age time of survey	: Average grade attained	: Entering High school No.	: Per cent
Operator	70	53	5.7	18	26
Wife	64	-	7.5	13	20
Sons, 16 - 30 years	46	30	8.5	22	48
Daughters, 16 - 30	18	18	9.4	13	72
Children, 6 - 16	63	12	5.7	7	11

exerted an influence favouring early and full attendance at school. Only two of the settlers had never been to school; all other family members of school age had attended. Girls, more readily released from farm tasks, reached a higher level of education.

Farm Experience.- Sixty per cent of these settlers had been raised on farms (Table 29) and were, therefore, acquainted with the conditions and hardships they were likely to encounter in rural life. The remaining 40 per cent were not so fully experienced, having been on farms only for short periods of time as hired help, or in seeding, haying and

harvesting operations.

Table 29.- Farm Experience of Settlers

Degree of farm experience	Number	Per cent
Lifetime farm experience	10	14
Raised on a farm but had subsequent experience in another occupation	32	46
Part-time farm experience only	27	39
No farm experience	1	1
Total	70	100

Other Experience.- Most of these settlers had gained experience in various occupations other than farming (Table 31). They were, consequently, better able to adapt themselves to settlement conditions and to supplement their incomes through part-time work off the farm. At time of survey a few settlers had become full-time workers at their trades, leaving their families to run the farms.

Table 30.- Settlers' Experience in Occupations Other than Farming

Field of experience	Number	Per cent
Building trades - carpenters, etc.	8	11
Mechanical trades	20	29
Modified agriculture - gardeners, etc.	2	3
Small business trades - butchers, etc.	16	23
Labourers, handymen, etc.	12	17
No experience	12	17
Total	70	100

Levels of Living.- Settlers reached only minimum standards in construction and development of their homes. In most cases modern conveniences were absent (Table 31). The great majority used wood and coal for heating their homes and coal oil lamps for lighting. Many houses had only partial dirt cellars reached through trap doors. However, except for a few of the larger families the settlers were not crowded in their homes, having an average of one and one-third rooms per person.

Table 34.- Home Interior Furnishings

Item	Number	Per cent
Linoleum on kitchen floor	51	73
Linoleum on living room floor	35	50
Living room floor painted or varnished	8	11
Woodwork painted	29	41
Woodwork varnished	9	13
Walls papered	28	40
Walls calcedined	6	9
Plasterboard - calscmine or paper	15	21

Tables 32 - 34 indicate that these people, while lacking many of the common household properties associated with a higher plane of living, were not all without them. It was evident that on the whole they had made good progress in accumulating these possessions.

Accessibility of District Facilities.- Roads serving these settlers were generally characteristic of roads in the more remote areas of the province. Three per cent of the farms were without access to improved roads of any kind and only 20 per cent were served by all weather gravel roads. The remaining 77 per cent of the farms were reached by dirt grade roads varying from poor to good condition. Essential facilities (Table 35)

Table 35.- Distances to Facilities

	Shipping	Grade	High	Community	Doctor	Hospital
Miles to	point	school	school	Church	hall	
4 or less	14	56	15	26	32	0
5 - 16	31	14	40	32	21	20
17 or more	25	-	15	12	17	50
Total	70	70	70	70	70	70

were often remote enough to constitute a serious handicap to these settlers. General stores and grade public schools, were, however, within easy reach of most of them. Twenty per cent of the settlers were more than 30 miles from their shipping point (average distance 15 miles for the whole group) and 50 per cent were 30 to 70 miles from their nearest doctor or hospital.

PART III

EVALUATION OF THE SCHEME BY ESTABLISHED SETTLERS

Response to Schedule Questionnaire.- In the course of the field survey each of the settlers interviewed was asked a set series of questions. The answers to these questions have been grouped to reveal the attitude of the relief settlers towards the Relief Settlement Scheme.

Questioned as to the success of the scheme as a way of re-establishing the unemployed, sixty-six per cent of the settlers thought it was successful while 22 per cent thought it was unsuccessful in its purpose. Twelve per cent considered it successful only in the respect that such assistance in settlement was preferable to accepting direct relief. The answers reflected to some extent the circumstances of the settlers. Those who were able to use the scheme as a stepping-stone from unemployment, and had materially improved their position, regarded it favorably. The opinions of the remainder were largely governed by the degree of their success in farming.

Although no specific figures were quoted, 90 per cent of the settlers considered that a larger initial loan would have improved the scheme. In general the settlers felt that a larger initial loan would have enabled them to get into production and become self-supporting more rapidly.

Other suggested improvements to the scheme included:

- (a) The purchase of horses immune to swamp fever.
- (b) Cancellation of the loan debt when the settler becomes self-supporting.
- (c) Assistance in the securing of more suitable land for settlement.
- (d) More attention given to selection and screening of prospective settlers and less attention paid to relief organizations desiring to unload relief recipients through the agency of the relief settlement scheme.

Thirty-seven per cent of the settlers said they would not have settled on the land had it not been for the assistance given. Of the remainder 13 per cent thought they would have settled without assistance while 50 per cent would have tried to get out on the land. Evidently, a large proportion of these settlers had already considered farming as an escape from urban relief conditions. However, of all the settlers only 17 per cent thought they could have settled without assistance, while the remainder were quite sure that settlement would have been impossible if they had relied on their own resources.

The settlers indicated that many factors limited progress on the land at first and that personal and family initiative, thrift and sacrifice was necessary for success. They were aided by subsistence payments which

most of them considered inadequate. However, greater progress was made as farming and living conditions improved. Twenty-three per cent of the settlers were enabled to succeed through additional income from off-the-farm work. The remainder attributed their success to strong personal determination combined with the development of a sustaining enterprise such as hogs or a herd of milk cows.

The main hindrance to progress was a deficiency of the capital necessary for family living and farm development. Sixty per cent of the settlers mentioned this need for capital to bring their land into production as the main obstacle to progress. Many settlers considered that, had sufficient capital been available to develop 30 to 40 acres of cropland, subsistence payments would have been less necessary and failures less frequent.

At time of survey, 83 per cent of the settlers indicated that good future progress was assured. Four per cent had poor chances of success and 23 per cent thought they could proceed satisfactorily only under buoyant economic conditions.

SUMMARY

In the 1930's Dominion, Provincial, and Municipal governments contributed jointly to a fund to be used in assisting families on relief to settle on farms. At August 30, 1948 the total net cost of the scheme in the province of Alberta, excluding administration costs, was approximately one-half million dollars.

Thirty-eight per cent of the 1,092 settlers assisted in this province were more or less successfully established on farms. Of the rest, about one half were known to have become at least temporarily self-supporting in other employment.

Settlement was mainly on unimproved land throughout the grey wooded soil zone of Alberta. These farms offered little opportunity for rapid advancement. However, the buoyant conditions of the few years immediately preceding 1948 had resulted in their successful development. Cultivated acreages had been enlarged from an average of ten acres to an average of 75 acres per farm. Livestock numbers have grown proportionately. Altogether through acquisition and appreciation in value of property, an average gain in net worth of over \$6,000 had been achieved by settlers remaining on their farms. However, building development remained backward and equipment was generally obsolete. Living standards were not high with homes generally lacking in attractiveness and in many of the comforts and conveniences of modern farm homes.

One of the greatest obstacles retarding the progress of these settlers was their lack of means for bringing land into cultivation. Low income also was a disadvantage felt most severely by those who had cash land payments to make.

Regarded in a general way, this study reveals that the "Relief Settlement Scheme" in Alberta was successful as a means of rehabilitating a section of the unemployed. The total cash actually expended on the settlers was probably less than the cost of direct relief would have been. Besides this the settlers were given work to do and an opportunity to advance themselves. Even for those who did not remain on the farms the scheme served to bridge a gap and enabled them to secure re-employment elsewhere.

NO 1790 A3 R12
RACKHAM THOMAS S
BACK TO THE LAND

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Date Due

CIRC MR 15 '72	Due Ruth	DEC 08 '89
MAN 1 4 RETURN	NOV 28 RETURN	
	DATE DUE	NOV 26 '81
JUN 23 RETURN	DEC 05	1988
OCT 18 RETURN		JUL 11 '82
RUTH JUN 22 '78	JUL 20 RETURN	
JUL 18 RETURN		
DUE RUTH APR 30 '88		
SEP 22 RETURN		
DUE RUTH NOV 02 '81		
NOV 3 RETURN		
RUTH APR 28 '84		
MAR 28 RETURN		
RUTH APR 08 1987		
APR 13 RETURN		

